

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for considering the pending application. The Office Action dated September 10, 2007 has been received and its contents have been carefully reviewed.

Claims 1, 7, 17, 23, 29 and 39 have been amended and claims 2, 5-6, 8, 18, 24, 27-28, 30 and 40 have been canceled. No new matter has been added. Currently claims 1, 3-4, 7, 9-17, 19-23, 25-26, 29, 31-39 and 41-44 remain pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the pending claims.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 4, 23 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 2003-035893 (JP'893) in view of Mai (US 7,102,162).

The Office Action also rejects claims 2, 3, 7-16, 24, 25 and 29-38 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 2003-035893 (JP'893) and Mai (US 7,102,162) further in view of Smith et al. (US 6,574,487) and Kaneko (US 2002/0176036).

The Office Action also rejects claims 17-22 and 39-44 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 2003-035893 (JP'893) and Mai (US 7,102,162) further in view of Smith et al. (US 6,574,487) and Kaneko (US 2002/0176036).

Applicants respectfully disagree. However, in the interest of expediting prosecution, Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of claims 5 and 6, which have been indicated to be allowable. As such, amended claim 1 is now allowable over the cited prior art. Claims 3 and 4 depend on claim 1 and thus are allowable over the prior art at least for the same reasons as claim 1.

And, in the interest of expediting prosecution, Applicants have amended claim 23 to incorporate the subject matter of claims 27 and 28, which have been indicated to be allowable. As such, amended claim 23 is now allowable over the cited prior art. Claims 25 and 26 depend on claim 23 and thus are allowable over the prior art at least for the same reasons as claim 23.

Amended claims 7 and 17 include at least all elements of claim 1 and thus are allowable over the prior art at least for the same reasons as claim 1. Claims 9-16 and 19-22 variously depend on either claim 7 or 17 and thus are allowable over the prior art at least for the same reasons as claims 7 and 17.

Amended claims 29 and 39 include at least all elements of claim 23 and thus are allowable over the prior art at least for the same reasons as claim 23. Claims 31-38 and 41-44 variously depend on either claim 29 or 39 and thus are allowable over the prior art at least for the same reasons as claims 29 and 39.

Applicants, therefore, respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and the timely allowance of the pending claims. Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of the response, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative to expedite prosecution.

If there are any other fees due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-0310. If a fee is required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 not accounted for above, such an extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to our Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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